

Commission on Risk Assessment and Risk Management

July 21, 1997

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The Honorable Thomas S. Foley
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Dear Mr. Speaker:

Five years ago you appointed me and Josh Lederberg to the Presidential/Congressional Commission on Risk Assessment and Risk Management, mandated by the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990.

As you probably know, the Commission was convened in May 1994, and the other nine Commissioners--an admirable group--elected me as the chair.

We had a very productive and highly visible course of action, with monthly meetings alternatively held in Washington, D.C. and around the country for public input (except during the months of government shutdown or threatened government shutdown during 1995). We contributed to Congressional hearings and many other forums. We accomplished all of our activities and output with just three excellent staff persons.

We developed a new Framework for Environmental Health Risk Management that puts various environmental problems into public health and ecologic context and engages stakeholders from the start. This Framework is beginning to take hold in a way that we hope will be the counterpart to the risk assessment process recommended by the National Academy of Sciences/National Research Council "Red Book" report of 1983. In response to friendly public comment on our 1996 Draft Report, we created a special reader-friendly Volume 1 of our Final Report dealing explicitly with the Framework and providing examples of effective and ineffective efforts to engage stakeholders and put problems into context. You were sent a copy earlier this year right after our unveiling in a major meeting in the Rayburn House Office Building January 29. Another copy is enclosed along with Volume 2 of the Final Report recently made available by us and the Government Printing Office and also widely accessed on the Internet, as well as several clippings highlighting our recommendations.

*Congressionally authorized to investigate and make recommendations on the use of risk assessment
and risk management in Federal regulatory programs*

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Mr. Speaker

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We had a huge challenge during the change in leadership of the 104th Congress and in the cross-fire of various interest groups. It is gratifying to have made a mark that nearly all groups appreciate as highly constructive and useful. We are eager to see our recommendations and work carried forward by the Congress, the agencies, and many other groups.

I thank you for making this experience possible with your appointment.

My best wishes to you and Heather as you prepare--hopefully soon--to be confirmed as our Ambassador to Japan.

Sincerely yours,



Gilbert S. Omenn, M.D., Ph.D.

Chair, Commission on Risk Assessment and
Risk Management

Professor and Dean, School of Public
Health, University of Washington

cc: Bud Coffey
Jack Lein
~~James S. Gandy~~
Commission Members

Enclosures